

their work conditions will benefit their entire community.

I commend my cosponsors for their leadership on this important proposal, and I urge the Senate to approve it.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. HOLLINGS are printed in Today's record under "Morning Business.")

Mr. HOLLINGS. I yield the floor.

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The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:29 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CORZINE).

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

AMENDMENT NO. 2044

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise in support of the amendment offered by Senator DASCHLE which deals with the rights of police officers and firefighters—especially—firefighters to have the opportunity to organize in collective bargaining agreements.

This amendment is timely in light of what we have seen relative to the commitment of our firefighters across the country, along with our police officers and police personnel, in that it gives them rights which are given to most American Government employees.

With the enactment of this language, we will have essentially covered the majority of State and local employees in a consistent manner across the country.

The language of this amendment simply requires States to provide minimum collective bargaining rights to their public safety employees in whatever manner the States choose. In other words, if the State has any form of collective bargaining, they are basically exempt from this bill.

It outlines certain rights that must be protected, but it leaves the majority of decisions to State legislatures, and States that already have the minimum collective bargaining protection, as outlined in the legislation, will be exempt from Federal statutes, as will small municipalities and subdivisions.

The amendment also addresses the issue of the right to strike. As we know, public employees do not have a right to strike, and this amendment does nothing to advance that right to any public employee.

Further, it protects the right of each employee to join or refrain from joining a labor union organization. In other words, in States which have right-to-work laws, those right-to-work laws are not impacted at all by this legislation.

This legislation is extremely important, in my opinion, at this time because it is a statement by the Congress of our understanding of the importance of the jobs which firefighters and police officers do. We saw in New York, obviously, and we saw in Washington that these individuals put their lives on the line, and it is reasonable that they have a fair opportunity to make their case in the form of a collective bargaining atmosphere which is consistent with other Government employees and which is consistent with the laws in the States in which they live and work should those States have collective bargaining agreements.

I strongly support this amendment. I appreciate the majority leader bringing it forward. It did pass the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, of which I am the ranking member. There was not a recorded vote on it, but I can assure my colleagues it was a significant majority who supported the bill.

I look forward to it being taken up here and adopted in the Senate.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator DORGAN be allowed to speak following my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I wish to speak briefly about the amendment Senator DASCHLE laid down which would allow firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical personnel basic collective bargaining rights; that is to say, the right to form a union and to bargain over hours and wages and working conditions.

In other words, what we are saying is the firefighters, the police officers, the emergency medical personnel, the first responders on September 11—and indeed I meet with them all across Minnesota—they will be the first responders in all of our States if, God forbid, we have to deal with other attacks

that they have the right to join a union, bargain collectively in order to be able to earn a decent living, in order to have civilized working conditions, in order to be able to support their families.

I have to say on this last day of October of the year 2001, this is a no-brainer amendment, a no-brainer in that everybody should support it. It is crystal clear. As many have said, we are redefining heroes and heroines. It is crystal clear people in our country that there is just a reservoir of good feeling and strong support for these men and women. While we can have all of the benefit concerts and everybody can give all of the speeches in the world, enough speeches to deafen all the gods, the way we can actually show our support as Senators is to support this amendment, give the firefighters, give the police officers, and give the emergency medical personnel the right to join a union and bargain collectively.

My last point—and believe me, I will not do this, but I could literally talk for the next 20 hours on this, and I will only talk for 1 minute—I want this in the RECORD if it is not in the RECORD: Washington Post, A4, "Quick Action Urged on Economic Stimulus."

We have some quotes from several members of the administration basically saying if we extend the health insurance subsidies—in other words, people are out of work, it is terrifying, now you have lost your job, now you do not have any health care coverage for yourself and, maybe more importantly, for your children—that if in fact we pass a recovery bill that helps people to afford health care coverage for themselves and their loved ones, workers will lose the incentive to search for new jobs.

Coming from several members of the administration, the insulting assumption is if we were to help out unemployed workers with health care benefits so they could afford coverage for themselves and their loved ones, being lazy, they might not then actually find a job and work.

This is outrageous. I do not even know if I need to say anything more. I said I would only speak briefly, so I will not say any more. It is just outrageous.

We as Democrats have to have an economic recovery act that speaks to the unemployment benefits, speaks to health care coverage, speaks to job training, workforce development, speaks to investment and affordable housing or rebuilding crumbling schools, speaks to the whole infrastructure of public safety in the country, creates jobs, puts money in the economy, and enables people to purchase.

We ought to do that. We ought to do it now. If Democrats cannot stand for these families—firefighters, police, and other working families—and if we cannot do this now, then who are we and